



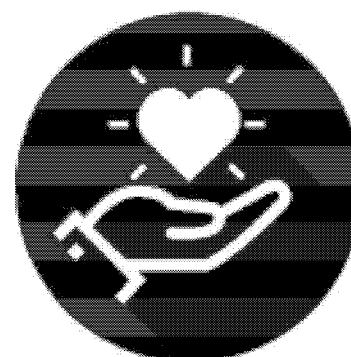
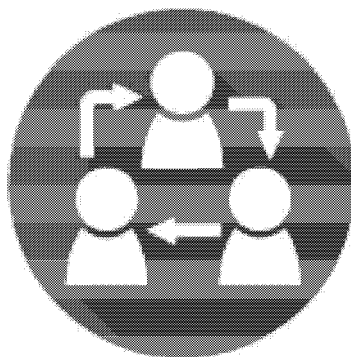
Canada Border  
Services Agency

Agence des services  
frontaliers du Canada



# **CBSA CULTURE DIAGNOSTIC**

**DECEMBER 2019**



PROTECTION • SERVICE • INTEGRITY

**Canada**

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## FOREWORD

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has its own culture, as does any organization. The culture is shaped by its history, its leaders, its written and unwritten rules. Culture influences employee morale, engagement and decisions, and ultimately drives performance and reputation. A unifying culture that creates conditions for employees to thrive is critical for any organization's success.

Ideally, this optimal culture is shaped deliberately when an organization is created. The CBSA was established in 2003 by pulling several parts of existing organizations together. Its history in some areas dates back to 1867. Many different cultures were combined. The absence of a unified CBSA culture has resulted in fractures throughout the organization, which is evident in the data that informs this diagnostic. Until now, other efforts to mobilize for transformation have fallen short or could not be sustained, in part due to cultural challenges.

It is not necessary – nor desirable – for a culture to be homogenous, but it IS necessary for employees to feel a sense of belonging to the whole, no matter where they work in an organization. And it IS necessary for the organization to know what it stands for. Many factors contribute to that feeling, and research indicates that several are lacking at CBSA. While building the culture at this stage of CBSA's evolution will be challenging given its history and size, the effort will pay dividends.

To begin the business of culture building, we must harness our strengths and understand our starting point in all its complexity. This report gives us that starting point. It describes the strengths and symptoms that are evident in our current culture, as well as the root causes of those symptoms. It relates the issues and strengths to our desired culture, and shows us where to place our energy.

This diagnostic tells the story of CBSA's culture as we close out our 16<sup>th</sup> year. In our 17<sup>th</sup> year, we turn the page and begin a new chapter of CBSA's Renewal story.

## PURPOSE

The CBSA's senior executive team has signalled a need and a commitment to build a healthier culture. They have done this through their own leadership and by establishing a team dedicated to culture within the Chief Transformation Officer Branch. This diagnostic<sup>1</sup> is the first major step. It is a frank snapshot of the CBSA's current culture and will serve as a guide for future interventions to shift the culture sustainably.

## WHAT IS CULTURE?

### Definition

An organization is a complex human system. Its culture is continually shaped by internal and external forces. Culture can be viewed as the collective patterns of behaviour within a system, determined by history, leaders, norms, and values. It can also be described as the organization's written and unwritten rules, or simply as, "How we do things around here."

### Why culture matters

There is a widely held belief among organizational theorists and practitioners that culture matters greatly. Peter Drucker is famously quoted as saying, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." At its core, this phrase means that even the best strategies will fail if an organization's culture is not ready to accept them. This is particularly important when considering the amount of strategic and operational change being undertaken as part of CBSA Renewal.

According to McKinsey and Company, culture matters because<sup>2</sup>:

- It correlates to performance. The stronger and healthier, the higher the return. The opposite is also true, an unhealthy culture can be an organization's undoing. In a public sector context, this means the capacity to deliver a mandate.
- A healthy culture can adapt to changing conditions and find new ways of succeeding more easily in the face of challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> **GBA+ considerations:** The body of this work strives to use inclusive language to speak to a wide breadth of experiences within the CBSA. When considering the possible identity factors that encompass the diverse population of the Agency, the data collection was primarily limited to job role-related factors. These factors include whether an individual works on the frontline or not, in headquarters or a region, is an employee or in management. Other intersecting identity factors that were not readily available and taken into account at this time included personal aspects, such as: age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, language, education, and income.

<sup>2</sup> McKinsey and Company, *Culture: 4 keys to why it matters*, March 2018. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-organization-blog/culture-4-keys-to-why-it-matters>

- 70% of transformations fail, and of those failures, 70% are culture-related. This means 49% of all transformations fail because of culture.

Deloitte's insights into culture stress its importance in delivering business outcomes. The system of values, beliefs, and behaviours shapes how the work gets done in an organization and is closely tied to performance. Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends survey (2016) demonstrates that more and more organizations are admitting that culture is important, but not widely understood, measured or managed. Deloitte goes further to state that, "Culture can determine success or failure during times of change."<sup>3</sup>

The correlation between culture and performance is so strong because ultimately, people are the engine of any organization. Psychological safety is the best predictor of an organization's performance. When employees are in an environment of trust, they feel safe to be themselves and safe to disagree. This leads to higher quality decisions, which leads to higher performance.

## Culture strategy

The CBSA's culture strategy has three ingredients:

### 1. Diagnose the existing culture

- This is about getting to the root of what is working and not working; talking directly to individuals to understand the "what" and the "why" of these strengths and weaknesses.
- This is critical because attempting to shift an organization's culture before understanding it fully can do damage and have unintended consequences

### 2. Identify the desired culture to which the organization wants to shift

- It is important to be explicit about the desired culture, so that we have a common understanding of what is expected of us

### 3. Design and deliver interventions to achieve the desired culture

- What is designed aims to address root causes, not just symptoms
- To measure progress, a performance measurement framework is put in place

This culture strategy is adaptive, not linear. Although the aforementioned strategy is a general guide to move forward, each step of the process has its own feedback loop. This iterative approach is called Adaptive Action and is suited to projects involving change in human

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<sup>3</sup> Deloitte. *Shape culture, drive strategy*. February 2016. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends/2016/impact-of-culture-on-business-strategy.html>

behaviour. The more adaptive the approach, the more likely the interventions will have the intended consequences or impacts on behaviour.

## EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

### Context

The aim of the external review is to provide context for the current environment in which the CBSA operates. The federal government context and public perception is complex and informed by many domestic and international trends and issues. It is important for the context of this report to understand the impact this has on the CBSA's culture.

#### Public service culture

The culture of the public service has been receiving an increased amount of attention. The Clerk of the Privy Council's reports over the past few years acknowledge the need for culture change within the federal public service. The Beyond 2020 initiative includes a call to shift mindsets and behaviours to be more inclusive, creative, innovative, and flexible.<sup>4</sup> Adopting these mindsets continues to be a challenge as traditional norms and structures act as barriers to change.

The public service tends to operate in divisional and hierarchal structures that can undermine empowerment, frustrate innovation, and create inertia.<sup>5</sup> Former Clerk, Michael Wernick, urged public servants to nurture a culture that allows for disagreement and discussion.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the Clerk highlighted the manner in which feedback is provided as a contributing factor to the imperfect culture.<sup>7</sup>

Attending to the culture of the public service was one of the key lessons learned from the implementation of Phoenix. The *Lessons Learned from the Transformation of Pay Administration Initiative* report noted that culture is "integral in determining how tasks are completed, the way people interact with one another, the language they use when communicating, and the attitudes, goals, values, and leadership behaviours that are exhibited." The public service culture was found to be one that is risk averse and unreceptive to bad news. A focus was placed on briefing up only the good news, leading to the major risks and concerns around implementation to not be heard and considered at senior levels. The report stated that in a culture where failure

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<sup>4</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Report to the Prime Minister On the Public Service of Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/documents/pdfs/clerk-greffier/24rpt-eng.pdf>), 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report to the Prime Minister On the Public Service of Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/images/ann-rpt/25/rpt-25-eng.pdf>), and 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Report to the Prime Minister On the Public Service of Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/documents/pdfs/ann-rpt-2019-eng.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> Harvard Business Review, "What we learned about bureaucracy from 7,000 HBR readers." August 2017. <https://hbr.org/2017/08/what-we-learned-about-bureaucracy-from-7000-hbr-readers>

<sup>6</sup> Ipolitics, June 2018. <https://ipolitics.ca/2018/06/12/clerk-defends-bureaucracy-against-accusations-of-a-broken-culture/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

is not tolerated, it stunts learning and innovation to respond to complex problems and a changing transformation agenda.

In the field of law enforcement, issues related to officer conduct, harassment, discrimination and workplace violence have received sustained public and media attention for more than a decade.

Based on the data collected to assess our internal environment, these challenges are found within the CBSA as well. There is a common experience shared across organizations in addition to the unique challenges the CBSA faces.

### Media Coverage of the CBSA

As a large institution with whom most of the public often interacts, public attention is inevitable. Employee identity and morale can be affected by public perception, as shaped by their direct interactions and by the media. Media attention tends to be negative by nature, which can cause stress and place a burden on employees to rise above it. Over the past 18 months (April 2018 to September 2019), the most prominent issues that emerged in the media pertaining to the CBSA<sup>8</sup> were 1) the current trends and opinions surrounding migration and asylum both within Canada and internationally, including conditions of detention centres 2) privacy impacts of technological advancements in border security and travel, and 3) the absence of an external oversight body.

## INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

### **Current culture – Methodology for Diagnosis**

Although the CBSA as it exists today was created in December 2003, its legacy dates back to 1867. Different organizations with their own cultures were combined 16 years ago to form the current organization. Since then, there has not been a concerted successful effort to build a unified culture out of the disparate parts, as evidenced by the research and findings of this report.

The analysis of our current culture is based on the following sources of data, collected from April 2018 to November 2019:

- The Listening Tour data (May 2018 – November 2019)
- The Culture Design Workshops with Culture Ambassadors (November 2018 and September 2019)
- CBSA All Executive Forum (May 2019)

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<sup>8</sup> Note – the majority of these stories have been retrieved through online news journals.

- Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results (2018)
- Renewal Volunteers Culture Survey (April 2018)
- Recognition awards and kudos
- Data collected at Character-based Leadership workshops in 2019

These sources represent a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

The multiple sources of data with different limitations and methodologies allowed for triangulation of the findings.

The following describes the participation rates and limitations of the data sources:

- **Listening Tour:**
  - Approximately 400 employees participated across 30 sites from May 2018 to November 2019.
  - Notes were captured by several different note takers and therefore were recorded with different levels of detail.
  - Some of the notes did not reflect overall tone, body language or context in the room.
  - The design of the session from discussing existing to desired culture may have prompted more focus on constructive criticism and set the tone for the sessions to start with the negative and move into more positive discussions.
- **Culture Design Workshops:** in November 2018 and September 2019, 25 employees from across the country representing all branches and regions came together at the CBSA College to analyze and validate the data of the Listening Tour and identify root causes that affect our culture.
- **The 2018 PSES** had 6,377 respondents, representing a 43.4% response rate. This falls below the public service response rate of 57.7%, although it is statistically significant.
- **The Renewal Volunteers Culture Survey** was filled out in April 2018 by 406 volunteers who put their name forward with a desire to support change. Of the sample, 227 completed the survey and 179 partially did.
- **The Executive Forum** on the topic of Leading CBSA Renewal held on May 23, 2019 had a thorough methodology for capturing data, which combined qualitative and quantitative measurement.



## Themes in Current Culture

### Pride

All of the data sources indicated that employees feel a great deal of pride in the work that they do and believe in its importance to the country. Throughout the Listening Tour, it was the positive word that was spoken most frequently to describe the CBSA's current culture. According to the 2018 PSES, 81% of CBSA employees are proud of the work they do<sup>9</sup> and 72% like their jobs<sup>10</sup>.

Employees of the CBSA truly care about their work and the role they play in safeguarding the country, as well as the support they provide the millions of travellers crossing Canadian borders throughout the year. Looking to the Atlas kudos walls, evidence of officers taking a great deal of care and time in supporting travellers is clear. The Border Services Officers (BSOs) are continually going the extra mile to help those who need it, from responding to medical emergencies, helping to unite families, and providing comfort and care to refugee claimants undergoing a difficult time.

The source of pride relates more to an individual's disposition towards the type of work that they do than the environment itself. A majority feel that their job is a good fit with their skills (79%)<sup>11</sup> and with their interests (76%)<sup>12</sup>. Other indicators that may contribute to a sense of pride, like attitudes toward the workplace, are low. Less than half of PSES survey respondents are satisfied with working at the CBSA (44%)<sup>13</sup> or recommend it as a great place to work (43%)<sup>14</sup>. When asked whether respondents would remain with the CBSA if there was a comparable job elsewhere, only 42% of respondents responded positively<sup>15</sup>, a 17% gap when compared to the average public service responses.

A frequent desire expressed in the Listening Tour and other engagement sessions on culture is for the CBSA to do a better job telling its own story to the public and the media. Employees point to feeling undermined in their role of protecting our borders, when more attention is paid to border wait times or when the contribution CBSA made to a case is absent or derided. This lowers their morale as CBSA employees, and provokes a hesitance in many cases to tell others about where they work. A remarkably common sentiment is that the television show *Border Security*:

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<sup>9</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 10. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saif/2018/results-resultats/bq-pq/83/org-eng.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, question 14.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, question 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, question 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, question 44.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, question 43.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, question 45.

*Canada's Front Line*<sup>16</sup> offered a counter-narrative that employees felt proud of, and that contributed to the public's compliance through education.

Respondents to the Culture Survey were asked, "What strength(s) should the Agency leverage to help transformation and culture change?" and nearly one quarter (24%) indicated pride<sup>17</sup>. This indicates that pride plays an important role in the work the CBSA does, that having it, and showing it in different ways, is a strength of the organization that can be nurtured. Commitment to serve Canadians and leadership at all levels (both 27%) were other important aspects that should be leveraged as well, according to Culture Survey respondents.

## Trust

Low trust within the organization is evident in the data. A lack of trust was one of the sentiments that frequently appeared in discussions during the Listening Tour.

Participants of the first Culture Design Workshop<sup>18</sup> found trust to be a foundational layer that is lacking, and perpetuates a number of negative symptoms within the CBSA's culture. They agreed that achieving a higher level of mutual trust between senior management and employees is essential to its overall health. These sentiments are also echoed in the open-ended responses to the Culture Survey. A number of respondents named trust as a need, in particular the trust between employees and management.

Indicators of trust for employees and management can include:

- Willingness to be vulnerable
- Quality of relationships
- Confidence in leadership
- Leading by example
- Honesty and integrity

When considering the need for mutual trust, the relationships between employees and management vary. The closer the management layer is to the employee, the higher indicators of trust seem to be. For example, according to the 2018 PSES results, 70% of employees believe that their immediate supervisor seems to care about them as a person<sup>19</sup>, and 65% feel that they

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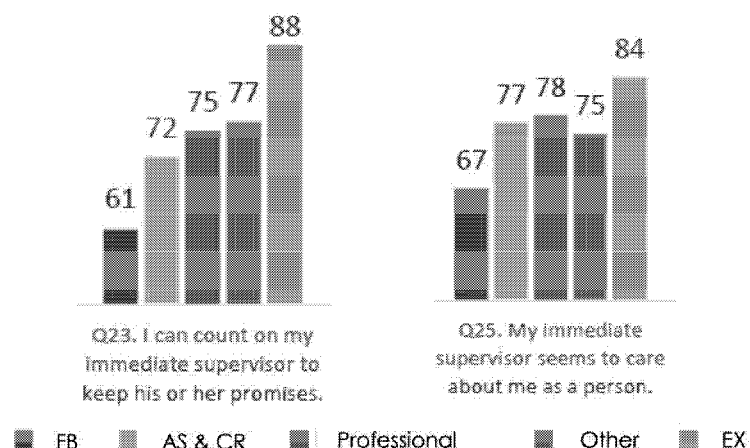
<sup>16</sup> *Border Security: Canada's Front Line* was a reality television program that aired for three seasons beginning in 2012 on the National Geographic Channel.

<sup>17</sup> 2018 CBSA Culture Survey, question 5.

<sup>18</sup> Note – in November 2018, 25 employees from across the country came together for a three day workshop to analyze the data of the Listening Tour to date and identified root causes that were negatively impacting our existing culture.

<sup>19</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 25. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-soff/2018/results-resultats/bq-pq/83/org-eng.aspx>

keep their promises<sup>20</sup>. When observing this data by occupational group, the highest responses are from the EX group, the lowest from the FB group (see below).



The further disconnected employees are from decisions, the less confident they appear to be in management. The following indicators of trust are low within the CBSA:

- 27% of employees feel that senior management makes effective and timely decisions<sup>21</sup>
- 35% of employees have confidence in senior management<sup>22</sup>
- 43% of employees feel that senior managers lead by example in behaving ethically<sup>23</sup>

With regards to overall positive response rates, when compared to the public service, the CBSA is 10 percentage points below the average on questions about immediate supervisors, and 20 percentage points below for questions about senior management. While there has been an overall increase from 2017 to 2018 to the average positive response rate to senior management questions, responses from the frontline have declined.<sup>24</sup>

Employee responses to the PSES indicate a lack of confidence in decisions. It appears that there is an increased sense of trust in the relationship between employees and immediate supervisors, but the chain of trust moving upward through the hierarchy seems to be broken. During the Executive Forum, which took place in May 2019 across all seven regions and headquarters simultaneously, executives in 5 out of 8 of the sites (including headquarters) shared that they felt

<sup>20</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 23. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2018/results-resultats/ba-pq/83/orq-eng.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 31. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2018/results-resultats/ba-pq/83/orq-eng.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, question 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, question 29.

<sup>24</sup> CBSA 2018 Public Service Employee Survey: Presentation to the Executive Committee on Human Resources (June 2019), p 7.

their managers do not trust them. This supports the notion that a disconnect from senior management and decision making may amplify the overall sense of distrust.

In the ADP Research Institute's recently published report, *Global Study of Engagement*, building trust is one important factor that contributes to more engagement. When trust with a team leader is present, employees are 12 times more likely to be engaged. Trust that fosters a greater sense of engagement can be built when individuals have a clear sense of their role and when they know their contributions and strengths are valued.<sup>25</sup>

### Unity and clarity

The data indicates that employees' need for unity and clarity is not currently being met. The words "siloe" or "fractured" appeared the most frequently throughout the Listening Tour when participants were asked to describe the current culture in one word. These words were also reflected in the Culture Survey.

In the Listening Tour, the participants shared some insights that may point to this perception of the current culture:

- a strained relationship between the regions and headquarters (HQ)
- unclear identity (tension between law enforcement and facilitation), roles, and responsibilities
- a lack of vision and clear priorities
- a lack of collaboration
- legacy issues – a reluctance to change due to failed past attempts

The aforementioned issues, in part, can be linked to communications – in particular around vision and priorities. The disconnect between employees and senior management identified in the theme on trust, is also reinforced through communication. According to the PSES, 33% of employees feel that essential information flows effectively from senior management to staff<sup>26</sup>. Although a majority of employees (71%) feel they know how their work contributes to the CBSA's goals<sup>27</sup>, only half of employees (50%) feel like it does a good job at communicating its vision, mission, and goals<sup>28</sup>. There may also be some disconnect between perceived and actual goals, given the lack of clarity around priorities. When it came to clear work objectives, 57% felt they had them<sup>29</sup>. During the Executive Forum, 5 out of 8 of the sites (including headquarters)

<sup>25</sup> Bendaly, N. "The Results Are In: Current Employee Engagement Strategies Aren't Working. Here's What Does." (September 2019). *Forbes*. Accessed September 9, 2019: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolebendaly/2019/09/07/the-results-are-in-current-employee-engagement-strategies-arent-working-heres-what-does>

<sup>26</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 32. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pse-saff/2018/results-resultats/bq-pq/33/org-eng.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, question 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, question 33.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, question 7.

identified the need to break down initiatives into smaller more obtainable goals, as they felt the 15 initiatives of Renewal to be overwhelming and lacking prioritization.<sup>30</sup>

## Feeling valued

According to the PSES 2018, about half (49%) of employees feel valued<sup>31</sup>. Other indicators in the PSES that relate to employee support, recognition, and career progression reinforce these sentiments as the CBSA performs consistently below the public service average:

- 32% of employees feel the CBSA does a good job supporting their career development, compared to public service average of 57%<sup>32</sup>
- 45% of employees feel they receive meaningful recognition for work well done, compared to the public service average of 60%<sup>33</sup>
- 51% of employees feel they have the support they need to provide a high level of service, compared to the public service average of 67%<sup>34</sup>

During the Listening Tour, employees shared their feelings of being undervalued in their work. This was largely related to a lack of empathy and understanding from their superiors, feeling overworked, and poor communication. The phrase, "Jack of all trades, master of none" came up at multiple tour stops, which contributed to employees feeling unprepared and undervalued.

Just over half (53%) of employees indicated they get the training they need, which may contribute to employees feeling unprepared to do their work, frustration with tasks and roles, and lower overall levels of job satisfaction. Two thirds of employees (66%) feel a sense of satisfaction from their work, which remains unchanged from the previous year.<sup>35</sup> This result is 9% lower than the public service average, but consistent with other border management organizations in B5<sup>36</sup> countries, with the exception of Australia<sup>37</sup>. The feeling of being a master of none, with limited opportunities to develop an expertise because of the varied workload, may help explain why only one third of employees feel like CBSA does a good job of supporting their career development.

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<sup>30</sup> CBSA Executive Forum Report. July 2019, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 9. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-sqff/2018/results-resultats/bq-pq/83/org-eng.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, question 37.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, question 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, question 13.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, question 5.

<sup>36</sup> The B5 countries are: Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

<sup>37</sup> CBSA 2018 Public Service Employee Survey: Presentation to the Executive Committee on Human Resources (June 2019), p 10.

PSES results indicate that many employees feel less empowered in their roles compared to executives and to other public servants:

| PSES Question  | CBSA <sup>38</sup> (%) |            | Public Service Averages <sup>39</sup> (%) |            |
|--|------------------------|------------|---|------------|
|  | Employees              | Executives | Employees                                 | Executives |
| Q11. I have opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect my work        | 51%                    | 90%        | 65%                                       | 90%        |
| Q12. I am encouraged to be innovative or to take initiative in my work               | 51%                    | 85%        | 66%                                       | 87%        |
| Q18. In my work unit, every individual is accepted as an equal member of the team    | 58%                    | 87%        | 72%                                       | 91%        |
| Q39. I feel I would be supported by my department or agency if I proposed a new idea | 39%                    | 84%        | 52%                                       | 84%        |

The results of the above four questions point to a difference between the employee experience and the executive experience within the CBSA.

The CBSA is showing progress in some areas:

- The question on employees receiving the training they need has increased by 9% since 2017, from 44% to 53%, one of the most improved results for 2018<sup>40</sup>
- Support for work-life balance is also on the rise, up 4% from 57% in 2017 to 61% in 2018<sup>41</sup>

Culture Survey participants indicated in open-ended responses that regular employee engagement will be needed for a successful culture change to ensure individuals feel valued and their contributions matter. Respondents stressed the importance of empowering employees to be more effective in their jobs in order to bring about change in a successful, positive, and long-lasting way.

### Belonging and safety

Individuals have an inherent need, in their personal and professional lives, to be part of something real. Shame and vulnerability researcher Dr. Brené Brown calls this need "true

<sup>38</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, questions, 11, 12, 18, and 39. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pse-satf/2018/results-resultats/ba-pa/83/org-eng.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, questions, 11, 12, 18, and 39.

<sup>40</sup> CBSA 2018 Public Service Employee Survey: Presentation to the Executive Committee on Human Resources (June 2019), p 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

belonging." She has found that individuals often look for this by trying to fit in and seeking approval from others, which comes at a cost of being true to themselves, sometimes even rejecting part of their own identity. In her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Dr. Brown says, "true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance."<sup>42</sup> This requires the courage within to stand alone and be truly vulnerable, and for that to be in a place where it feels safe to trust others as well as ourselves. When looking at the observable data, the CBSA may not be offering those conditions. For example, the levels of harassment and discrimination that employees experience within the CBSA indicates that it may not be a safe environment to be one's self and truly belong.

According to the PSES 2018 results, of the 6,268 respondents to questions on harassment, approximately 1,378 employees (22%) stated that they have been harassed in the workplace within the past 12 months – 7% higher than the general public service results<sup>43</sup>. Of the 1,378 employees that responded they have experienced workplace harassment, 68% stated that they were harassed by individuals with authority over them, while 53% stated they were harassed by co-workers<sup>44</sup>.

Throughout the Listening Tour, participants shared they are uncomfortable or afraid of approaching their supervisor to discuss topics related to bullying and harassment. In the PSES 2018, 28% of the 1,378 employees responded that they took no action after experiencing harassment<sup>45</sup>. From this group that took no action, 64% responded that they took no action because they felt it would not make a difference, while 49% responded that they were afraid of reprisal.<sup>46</sup>

According to PSES 2018, of the 6,253 respondents on questions of discrimination, approximately 875 employees (14%) indicated that they have experienced discrimination in the workplace in the past 12 months – 6% higher than the general public service results.<sup>47</sup> From the group that experienced discrimination, 79% responded that they experienced discrimination from individuals with authority over them while 35% responded they experience discrimination from their co-workers.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Dr. Brené Brown, Finding our way to true belonging (September 2017), <https://ideas.ted.com/finding-our-way-to-true-belonging/>

<sup>43</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 48. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saif/2018/results-resultats/ba-pa/83/ora-eng.aspx>

<sup>44</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 49. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saif/2018/results-resultats/ba-pa/83/ora-eng.aspx>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, question 51i.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, question 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, question 55.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, question 56.

There have been positive trends since PSES 2017 on some indicators related to belonging and safety:

- 70% of respondents stated that within their work unit, individuals behave in a respectful manner in 2018, compared to 66% in 2017<sup>49</sup>
- 61% of employees responded that overall, the CBSA treats them with respect in 2018, compared to 60% in 2017<sup>50</sup>

During the Listening Tour, a desire for inclusion and a sense of belonging was expressed often by people who identify as LGBTQ+, a visible minority, Indigenous and having a disability. More specifically, approximately one third of participants in the Listening Tour stops with those advisory groups indicated they currently feel included (and are not experiencing barriers to their participation such as lack of accommodation or discrimination). They attributed this to a supportive supervisor. Similarly, those who pointed to feeling excluded attributed the experience to an unsupportive supervisor. Employees frequently expressed that they do not feel that they are treated fairly and equitably in these conversations, which points again to a lack of trust that the organization as a whole cares for individuals.

While there have been positive trends in the past two years, the PSES 2018 results indicate that individuals with disabilities and Indigenous employees experience a disproportionate rate of discrimination. Of those who filled out the PSES, 39% of employees with disabilities and 26% of Indigenous employees experienced discrimination.<sup>51</sup> Other identity factors of individuals who experienced discrimination include women (14%) and visible minorities (17%). It is important to note here how different intersecting identity factors are contributing to how individuals experience work differently.

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<sup>49</sup> 2018 Public Service Employee Survey Results for CBSA, question 20. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pres-saft/2018/results-resultats/bq-pq/83/orq-eng.aspx>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, question 42.

<sup>51</sup> CBSA 2018 Public Service Employee Survey: Presentation to the Executive Committee on Human Resources (June 2019), p 6.



# ROOT CAUSES

## Context and Considerations

### What is a root cause?

In order to understand the data described above and its origins, a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) was conducted. RCA is used to take a look at a problem in order to find out what happened, why it happened, and to figure out how to best reduce the likelihood of it continuing to happen, or happening again<sup>52</sup>. The root causes represent a deeper dive into the problems of the organization and the source of the challenges experienced by employees. They are therefore negative in nature. While pride was a theme, it was an element that was regarded as a benefit, something to be nurtured within our organization, and therefore is noted below as something that can be leveraged to building a healthier culture. The intent of using this analysis is to identify the source of the issue and not the symptom. For example, in medicine there is a difference between treating a symptom and curing a condition. A doctor prescribing painkillers for a broken leg is only treating the symptom (the pain). For the doctor to properly treat the root cause of the pain (the broken leg), the doctor must create a comprehensive plan to heal the bone that is broken<sup>53</sup>.

### How were the root causes identified?

For the CBSA, the overall problem that was identified by employees, using the data described above, was, "We don't have the culture we need." Through a two-day workshop in November 2018 using a design-thinking process, the CBSA's Culture Ambassadors<sup>54</sup> helped the Culture Division identify the root causes of that problem. The root causes are:

- A lack of a shared and meaningful identity
- A lack of effective and authentic communication
- A lack of courage and empathy

Although a lack of trust was identified as a prominent issue, it emerged as a leading symptom, and not as a cause. Similarly, while harassment and discrimination are of significant concern, they are a symptom of conditions that allow their occurrence. In other words, efforts to address the above three root causes would lead to increased trust and to a reduction in harassment and discrimination.

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<sup>52</sup> Mind Tools, Root Cause Analysis: Tracing a Problem to Its Origins. Accessed in August 2019.  
[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_80.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_80.htm)

<sup>53</sup> Mind Tools, Root Cause Analysis: Tracing a Problem to Its Origins. Accessed in August 2019.  
[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_80.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_80.htm)

<sup>54</sup> Culture Ambassadors: a group of over 20 CBSA employees from across country representing the branches and regions.

Just under a year later, in September 2019, the Culture Ambassadors came together again to consider the additional Listening Tour data, revisit the root causes to confirm their validity, and begin to carve out a path forward. These additional sources of data reinforced the initial root causes that were identified through the Culture Design Workshop.

### The significance of universal needs

The concept of universal needs was developed as part of a method called Non-Violent Communication. This method was created in the 1960s with the intent of achieving interpersonal harmony and learning in order to collaborate, and is sometimes referred to as Authentic Dialogue.<sup>55</sup> At its core, the approach asserts that all human beings have capacity for empathy and compassion and that individuals react in a hostile manner when their needs are not being met. This is based on the premise that there are universal human needs that individuals are all continually striving to meet. At any given time, what an individual needs may be different from those around them, and the quality of their connection with others will be determined by their ability to understand and communicate what they need. How individuals feel in that moment is simply an indication of a need being met, or not met. For example, a feeling of calm may arise because a need for order is being met, and a feeling of boredom may arise if a need for challenge is not being met. Identifying needs allows individuals to collaborate with others in order to develop strategies to best meet each other's needs. Throughout the following descriptions of the root causes, the universal needs being met or not met are named.

### GBA+ considerations

The descriptions below of the root causes and the related needs is a generalized version of what may be experienced by individuals. When reading the following passages, the reader is urged to consider their own intersecting identity factors that may shape their experience of the realities below. For some readers, none of the descriptions may hold true of their experience. For others, some or all may be experienced. Consider how those who are similar or different from you may be experiencing what is depicted below and the impact this may have on them.

### Character-based Leadership

Dimensions of character are referenced in the following sections, drawing on the research of Dr. Mary Crossan and her colleagues at the Ivey School of Business. This model of leadership, where character is elevated alongside competence, has been adopted by the CBSA. The intersections of character and culture merit a closer examination and will be explored further as part of the actions in response to this diagnostic.

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<sup>55</sup> Centre for Non-Violent Communication: <https://www.cnvc.org/>

## The root causes in detail

### Root Cause A: Lack of a shared and meaningful identity

The pride that employees said they feel in their jobs and their mandate is a critical strength. Their is pride in:

- protecting the country, by keeping it safe from inadmissible persons and goods
- serving Canadians
- welcoming visitors and individuals returning home, and potential new Canadian citizens,
- generating revenue, facilitating trade, and supporting Canadian businesses

However, the pride appears to be attached to the work that is done, and not to the CBSA itself in terms of feeling a sense of belonging to the whole.

Some employees are on the frontline, others are managing the operations and programs, or writing the policies. Some employees are developing new tools and training, providing financial or human resource-related support and advice, or keeping the CBSA organized and on track everyday. Others are strategizing for the future. Some employees identify primarily as law enforcement, others as facilitators. In many cases, employees identify most strongly with an identity from the past, such as customs, or immigration.

While pride is an incredible advantage, it is tenuous. Employees feel siloed and fractured as opposed to unified. They talk about fissures between groups, such as the frontline and non-frontline, management and non-management, headquarters and regions, etc. There is a resignation associated with these fissures, in that having an "us and them" mentality is simply "how we do things around here" and will always be the case.

This may be motivated by a universal need for self-preservation. Employees feeling undervalued, disrespected, excluded or disempowered by those "on the other side" may stand close to those they feel they can trust. This allows them to feel safe, to feel they belong, and to preserve an aspect of the identity that is valued. However, this is not true belonging and in fact contributes to a cycle of mistrust and doubt.

Impacts of this root cause issue are evident in terms of employees' low levels of trust, and confusion surrounding vision and priorities.

Through their analysis, the Culture Ambassadors noted from the data that a shared identity that has meaning for all employees would be unifying. This would meet the universal needs of clarity, purpose, connection, community, inclusion, acceptance, a sense of one's value and personal agency. Further, a meaningful identity would inform individuals' day-to-day judgment, and provide a context for employees to feel inspired and activate their transcendence.

The issue of a lack of shared and meaningful identity can be described as a polarity or tension between differing identities. The sustainable solution will not be choosing one side and rejecting the other. Instead, the CBSA will collectively shape and adopt a new identity that unites individuals, creates a sense belonging to the whole, and leaves space for individuals to be their authentic selves.

### Root Cause B: Lack of effective and authentic communication

The second root cause is a lack of effective and authentic communication. Employees report that there is a heavy reliance on corporate and written communications that do more to divide the organization than unite it. They point to a desire for more human interaction, especially when it comes to personal matters and changes that affect them, and to receive communication written plainly and honestly. When the truth is buried or skewed, the real conversations are not being held, thus eroding credibility, accountability and trust. During this time of significant change for the CBSA, effective and authentic communication is needed more than ever.

Employees described written messages from management as wordy, containing CBSA jargon, and focussing on process more than people. They often omit valuable pieces of information such as "what's in it for me (the receiver)" and "why does this matter?". This makes it difficult for the intended audience to understand the message and distances the sender from the receiver. Mass written emails or reports that are distributed widely may appear to meet the need of efficiency, but in fact, a customized message that engages audiences in different ways will usually be more effective in communicating the intended message. The current communication modes and styles often come across as though the sender is a "corporate machine" rather than a person, therefore losing the connection with the receiver and inadvertently sounding uncaring. The voice used in some of these messages are also authoritarian in tone, giving an impression that employees are not to be trusted. While broad-reaching messages are a useful tool, they are only one tool and need to be supplemented with more targeted communications, including face-to-face.

Employees also find information that is shared is not timely, and observe this is because the layers of approval, level of caution, and expectation of perfection get in the way of sharing relevant information when it would have the most impact and allow for meaningful feedback. This leads to holes in information that are either not addressed, addressed too late, or filled in with rumours and speculation. When nothing is being communicated, it is communicating something. Management may worry about the impact of the plain truth, so messages are coded with bureaucratic words like efficient and effective, or kept quiet until the last minute. Often this is motivated by wanting to protect others, however it can feel dismissive, or condescending, to those that management is trying to protect. Furthermore, those physically closer to senior managers tend to hear information sooner and have the opportunity to ask questions, as well as provide feedback. With the reliance on formal written communication to staff, those at the

frontline, or further away from senior managers, are often informed much later, creating inequity. This also offers limited opportunity for feedback. In-person conversations offer better opportunities for speaking up, seeking clarity, and learning together.

The issue of a lack of effective and authentic communication reflects a polarity or tension between values of caution and humanity. The data indicates the pendulum has swung further toward the former, eroding trust. The solution will not be in choosing one over the other or in finding a better balance. Instead, there is a need to create new communication habits that put individuals at the centre, which ultimately reduces risk because trust among employees and managers is present.

### Root Cause C: Lack of courage and empathy

The final root cause issue is a lack of courage and empathy. These aspects of individual character are crucial to creating safe and trusting environments where everyone feels they belong. Courage and empathy can be thought of as muscles that atrophy without conditioning. In this hierarchical environment where power tends to be centralized and trust is low, both of these character traits may be deficient and therefore challenging to activate. Self-preservation, the opposite of vulnerability, becomes the easier route than putting oneself "out there" and taking risks. The financial trouble the organization faced several years ago may have contributed to this environment.

Courage, at its core, is the capacity for a person to be vulnerable. At headquarters, a majority of executives and managers wish they had the courage to "speak up," according to Character-based Leadership Workshops on the topic in 2019. From the themes that arose at the workshop, speaking up means:

- **Speaking the truth:** standing up against bullying or saying something when something does not feel right.
- **Saying no:** being able to say no when your workload is too heavy and holding the organization accountable to its priorities.
- **Giving and receiving honest feedback:** being more direct, yet tactful, in feedback to employees or senior management. Able to make difficult decisions and confront difficult situations.
- **Challenging the status quo:** working to change ineffective processes and not be complacent with how things are.

It follows that if management has trouble speaking up, the modeling necessary for employees to have the courage to speak up may not be occurring. Another pattern reported by executives and managers, more prominent in the regions and present to a lesser extent at headquarters, is speaking up but not feeling heard. Again, this would have the impact of discouraging employees from speaking up and disagreeing, since it would seem fruitless. This pattern was raised often by employees during the Listening Tour. Resultant behaviour is finding other, possibly

less constructive, ways to be heard, or becoming cynical, withdrawn or subversive. This compromises the diversity of voices, which affects the quality of decisions, erodes trust and, ultimately, organizational performance.

Not being heard is a dehumanizing experience linked to a lack of empathy. Exercising empathy is about "putting ourselves in another's shoes." Through empathy, a stronger connection with others is created. At the heart of exercising empathy is the capacity to fully listen without judgment or agenda.

Demonstrating empathy can feel inefficient. For example, involving and considering others takes time. Allowing room for mistakes and failures takes patience. User-centred design, such as asking employees to test new tools before implementation, or seeking feedback on the clarity of an operational bulletin before issuance, adds a step in a process. Yet ultimately efficiencies are gained when the tool or bulletin meets the needs of the user, and when the organization continuously learns.

Lack of empathy for the other's needs or perspectives contributes to the challenges individuals experience around feeling siloed and fractured. Completing a task that requires a colleague's support can be exhausting and time consuming if that colleague or process considers only their own needs. When a manager does not empathize with an employee's needs, situations of feeling undervalued, unsupported, excluded, having unclear/excessive expectations, stress, and mental illness may occur. This relationship is not one-way. When an employee does not seek to understand the position of their manager and their responsibilities, these same feelings may also surface.

The collected data demonstrates that a lack of courage and empathy has created conditions where:

- many voices at all levels are not being heard, and therefore not feeling understood or valued
- individuals are afraid of making mistakes, which stifles innovation
- individuals feel the organization does not care for them nor for their advice

This issue can be described as a polarity or tension between the need for self-preservation and need for trust. The solution will be in learning how to be authentic and vulnerable, by developing courage and empathy, so that both self-preservation and trust are possible.

## PREDOMINANT MINDSETS

### What is a mindset?

Mindsets usually exist below the level of awareness. They mostly go untested and unexamined.<sup>56</sup> Considering the above issues within CBSA, it can be helpful to attempt to name the mindsets that are predominant. These can also be described as the unwritten rules of the organization. New employees notice them early on, and learn quickly to adopt them as they settle in to their new workplace.

Mindsets can serve individuals well, or they can limit possibilities and work against them. The following section will aim to name the mindsets that are contributing to the root causes and therefore not serving us well. They are informed by the data presented in this report and are a reflection of an analysis conducted by the Culture Division. The various identity factors of an individual may also have an impact on how they experience these mindsets, or the degree to which they adopt them. The mindsets will continue to undergo validation as more engagement sessions are held with employees and senior management over the course of the work being done on culture. There are many other mindsets that serve us well and that need to be valued. The ultimate aim will be to re-write the unwritten rules that are not serving us, to achieve a healthier culture.

### Mindsets that contribute to the root causes

#### Keep quiet and stay close to home

A predominant mindset is that it is better to keep quiet and avoid being vulnerable. In other words, the unwritten rule is that speaking up or letting others know one's feelings, advice, ideas or experiences will not make a difference, or is too risky. Related to this is the sense that the organization as a whole will not support or protect the individual. Only certain people or groups can be trusted, therefore staying "close to home" is the safest bet.

#### Following the rules trumps the greater good

Another predominant mindset is that following and enforcing the rules strictly is more valued than working together to find new possibilities, and is safer than questioning authority. This mindset reduces the opportunity for creativity, collaboration and learning, and from using

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<sup>56</sup> Senge, P.M. et al. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Doubleday.

judgment to resolve problems. Lack of accountability or sense of common purpose contributes to this mindset.

### Only bring the parts to work that others will value and accept

This predominant mindset is informed by a lack of safety needed to be vulnerable enough to bring one's whole self to work. When employees are unable or afraid to bring their true and authentic selves to work, it may be limiting their contributions. This also illuminates the tension between various groups of the CBSA. The fractured identity creates confusion regarding what skills, behaviours, and experience are actually valued, resulting in employees feeling as though they have to choose which part of their identity they can express.

### Our past defines our future

The CBSA has trouble learning, making and forgiving mistakes, failing, and adapting. Many individuals point to change fatigue, which is likely a result of a pattern of poorly managed change. Feeling doomed to repeat the past, individuals tend not to dare to do things differently, and tend to doubt that true Renewal is possible.

## WHAT'S NEXT

This diagnostic offers a detailed look into the current culture. This report is in no way designed to take away from the incredible work that is done on a daily basis to keep the country safe and to support the millions travelling, shipping, immigrating, or seeking safety. It is a signal for the CBSA to work collectively to grow and come together as a community.

The next phase of work will be to design interventions that will address the root causes to create a culture that is courageous, cohesive, caring and founded on trust.<sup>57</sup> There are many levers that impact culture, from governance, leadership development, communications, and business processes, to performance measures, awards and recognition, and training. Several steps have already been taken, many more will come.

The changes that are coming will be iterative and will take time. The CBSA will continue to learn about its culture through this process and adapt to the needs as they evolve. The process will require perseverance, and it is evident from the collection of data that there are thousands ready to do what it takes.

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<sup>57</sup> **GBA+ Considerations:** As the culture strategy progresses, the flexible model of GBA+ will be used to respond to the needs of diverse groups. The intent will be to identify both the potential positive and negative impacts of any new initiatives or changes to existing processes for different identity factors. This will encourage a critical and active reflection on how to approach these interventions and mitigate any potential risks that may be identified.



- Employees of the CBSA are deeply proud of the work that they do, but not proud of where they work
- There are low levels of trust in the organization
- The organization is not meeting the conditions necessary for employees to thrive and to be entirely free from harassment

To begin addressing this, the CBSA will focus its efforts at the root cause of issues by:

- Building a shared and meaningful identity
- Developing its capacity for effective and authentic communication
- Exercising courage and empathy

The strengths that will be leveraged are the pride that keeps employees loyal and hard-working, their commitment to serve Canadians, and the predominance of people with the disposition to lead at all levels of the organization. The progress already made in adopting character-based leadership is the single most promising step the CBSA has taken. A relentless commitment to a character-infused culture will have an enormous impact on the work environment.

**Actions already taken in the past year to respond to the issues as they came to light are:**

- Launch of a leadership development strategy in May 2018 focused on Character-based Leadership
- Establishment of a Strategic Change Office, to build a change management capacity throughout the Agency and improve adaptability in support of Renewal
- Creation of a team devoted to strengthening our culture
- Implementation, beginning in December 2018, of a "One Team strategy" with the senior executive committee to build their trust and cohesion, in recognition of the significant impact on the rest of the organization
- Gradual roll-out of ceremonial uniforms to all border services officers
- Changes to criteria for President's awards to reflect desired character and behaviours
- Incorporation of commitment to culture and character development in executives' letters of offer and performance management agreements

**Action currently underway:**

- Establishment of a network of Culture Ambassadors to support Agency-wide efforts at a grassroots, local level
- Revamping and maturing the integrated business planning process to clarify and manage priorities
- Piloting a Plain Language initiative to send frank, simple and tailored messages on Renewal

- Strategy to create and adopt a shared and meaningful CBSA identity through engagement at all levels

**Upcoming actions:**

- Procurement of a psychometric tool for use by teams throughout the agency to build cohesion and improve communication
- Launch of a web-based feedback tool to engage with employees in real time on issues that matter to them
- Additional training and tools for leaders such as coaching and development of leader character, and further research and integration of character-based leadership in organizational practices
- Many other actions developed with employees ...

This work to shift CBSA's culture is not a "box-ticking" exercise that involves superficial action. While some changes in the culture may be felt quickly, most of the tangible results will take months or years to take hold. The results will, however, be sustainable, because they are in response to the real issues as recounted by employees. The groundwork has been laid in this diagnostic. As we turn the page, the next chapter of CBSA's history will be written by all of us.